



**Board Report**

**File #:** 2022-0399, **File Type:** Program

**Agenda Number:** 39.

**EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE  
JUNE 16, 2022**

**SUBJECT: METRO TRANSIT AMBASSADOR PILOT PROGRAM SERVICES**

**ACTION: APPROVE RECOMMENDATION**

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

CONSIDER:

- A. AUTHORIZING the Chief Executive Officer to negotiate and award firm fixed unit rate contracts to Strive Well-Being Inc. (Contract No. PS88001001) and RMI International Inc. (Contract No. PS88001000) to provide a pilot Transit Ambassador Services Program, subject to the resolution of protest(s) if any. Strive Well-Being’s contract not to exceed amount is \$15,878,421 for the three-year base pilot and \$11,879,023 for the additional two, one-year options, for a total not to exceed amount of \$27,757,444. RMI International’s contract not to exceed amount is \$55,400,768 for the three-year base pilot and \$39,690,212 for the additional two, one-year options, for a total not to exceed amount of \$95,090,980. The combined total not to exceed amount for both firms over the five-year pilot is \$122,848,424; and
- B. DELEGATING authority to the Chief Executive Officer to execute any future Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with Los Angeles County departments and/or City of Los Angeles partners for supplementary ambassador program services to enhance the Ambassador Program during the pilot period, in an amount not-to-exceed \$20,000,000, inclusive of administrative fees and other pilot initiatives, in support of the annual investments identified for Transit Ambassador Program Services in Board Motion 26.2.

**ISSUE**

The primary objectives of the Transit Ambassador pilot program are to provide a visible presence, build relationships with Metro riders and Metro employees, and offer in-person support to riders geared toward improving the everyday interactions that transit customers experience. This pilot program will provide contract personnel for deployment around the system. Ambassadors will be a layer within Metro’s overall public safety ecosystem in connection with Metro’s system security, law enforcement, crisis response teams, and homeless outreach.

**BACKGROUND**

Maintaining a safe, clean and reliable transit system is integral to improving Metro’s customer

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experience. Through the approval of Motion 26.2 (Attachment A), Motion 25.1 (Attachment B), and other directives, the Board directed staff to reimagine the agency's investments and approach to public safety on the transit system.

Metro is committed to improving the overall customer experience through improved safety measures on the transit system. One way to improve the customer experience is to provide a more visible presence of trained, easily identifiable, uniformed staff that customers can rely on. The pilot Transit Ambassador program will be a field-based team trained to play a rider-facing and welcoming role and help connect unhoused riders to resources and/or assistance.

Since 2021, Metro staff has been developing a framework for a successful transit ambassador pilot program. Staff collected direct feedback from internal and external stakeholder working groups. Staff incorporated the priorities of the Public Safety Advisory Committee (PSAC - Attachment C), solicited direct customer and employee feedback (via the 2021 Public Safety Perceptions Survey), and reviewed elements of other national ambassador programs. Staff reviewed the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) Transit Ambassador Program and the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) Safety, Cleaning, Ownership, Partnerships, and Engagement initiative (SCOPE) for lessons learned and has incorporated industry best-practices into Metro's program.

This initiative will provide a pilot ambassadors program for up to five years. The anticipated base pilot program period is August 1, 2022 - July 30, 2025. Ambassadors will provide additional eyes and ears on our transit system. Metro project staff will evaluate real-time data and customer feedback to refine the program as we gain experience over time. Ambassadors can directly connect to Metro's public safety system to call for the appropriate level of response from maintenance, transit security, law enforcement and/or homeless outreach.

## **DISCUSSION**

The pilot Transit Ambassador Program will utilize contracted services of the recommended firms to develop, implement, and manage a cohesive unit of qualified and effective public-facing personnel deployed at Metro's direction throughout the transit system. Metro is aligning with firms that have demonstrated their expertise in delivering exceptional customer service and providing personnel that will meet the needs of Metro's diverse ridership and employee workforce.

Ambassadors will add a customer-friendly Metro "brand" presence on the system, and staff anticipates that the recognition will positively impact the customer experience and overall perception of safety when riding Metro. The summer 2021 Public Safety Perceptions Survey results show significant support for assistance and staff presence on the system who can help customers with disabilities (89% support more staff), assist riders experiencing homelessness (85% support more staff), and Metro Transit Ambassadors (82% support having Ambassadors on Metro).

The Ambassador Pilot Program builds off the recently signed agreement with the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health to deploy teams of contracted personnel comprised of community members and peers to provide coverage geographically, at varying hours, to support unhoused riders, riders experiencing severe addiction and mental health crisis on the system. These crisis intervention teams are comprised of community-based mental health and peer advisors who will be

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able to respond and provide on-site mental and physical health evaluations to riders on the system. This partnership will utilize support from community-based organizations to provide staffing and resources to enhance the Transit Ambassador Program.

Pairing Transit Ambassadors with Crisis Intervention Specialist (CIS) teams has proven successful in several other transit ambassador programs. Having CIS on the system reduces response times for those needing critical mental health services. On average, 30% of referrals from Law Enforcement teams require crisis intervention support. Recommendation B delegating authority to the CEO to enter into future partnerships with the Los Angeles County Department of Health Services and other County and City departments will provide flexibility to expand the ambassador program's reach as needed.

Initiating this program, evaluating its effectiveness, monitoring improvements to the customer experience and the perception of safety will be key to gauging equity impacts. Metro will directly maintain program oversight of the contractors and personnel on the system to measure program impacts on low-income riders, riders with disabilities, and unhoused riders. The personnel who will serve as Transit Ambassadors must complete a comprehensive pre-deployment training curriculum provided by Metro, which includes cultural and situational awareness, unconscious bias training, disability awareness, customer service, trauma-informed response, and other personal and public safety courses.

The project includes two selected firms to implement pilot programs at Metro facilities and on-board vehicles for three years. Metro reserves the right to execute up to two, one-year options to extend the contracts. Strive Well-Being Inc.'s (Strive) is an SBE and proposed to enlist the services of three Community Based Organizations (Union Station Homeless Services, Communities Actively Living Independently & Free, and Homeboy Industries) in its proposal. Strive demonstrated an ability to understand the importance of strong, robust community participation in the ambassador pilot program. Through its core business platform of facilities management and health and wellness management initiatives, Strive has demonstrated its experience and interaction with a general public population with a wide range of varying degrees of lived experiences. Strive proposes to utilize approximately 55 people to perform the transit ambassador services on Metro's rail system and station elevators.

RMI International Inc. (RMI), a Minority Business Enterprise, has aligned itself with WorkSource Regional Business Services and the Southeast Los Angeles County Workforce Development Board to supplement recruitment opportunities. The diversity of RMI's business portfolio between the public and private sectors demonstrates RMI's cross-section of interface with different populations. RMI has proposed to utilize approximately 244 people to perform the transit ambassador services across the entire Metro system.

Metro will solidify the ambassador deployment plans during the 60-day mobilization period. This will allow Metro staff to critically assess the program pilot stations, bus routes, locations, and coordination with Metro departments and the contractors' abilities. Staff will coordinate internally on program decisions during development, implementation, and rollout to ensure operational effectiveness. After the pilot period and program evaluation, staff will return to the Board with recommendations to

conclude the program or fund and implement a permanent Transit Ambassador program.

To evaluate the pilot program and the contractors' effectiveness, staff will conduct regular rider and employee surveys as well as directly analyze program metrics on an on-going basis. The contractors must provide comprehensive written reports and data to Metro to evaluate the program. Ambassadors and field supervisors will be required to collect and report to Metro daily, weekly, and monthly on data to support program evaluation. This data will be used to evaluate program effectiveness trends and measure improvement to the overall customer experience over time. Metrics that will be evaluated include (at the minimum):

- Number and type of customer interactions (educational, direct customer assistance, unhoused services)
- Number of calls for security or law enforcement response
- Number of calls for maintenance response
- Ambassador Program personnel recruitment/vacancy rate

This will help Metro to identify program elements requiring modification and will allow Metro to design plans that work in connection with the overall public safety response. These firms can guide Metro in assessing our deployment strategy, identifying areas for increased customer engagement, and strategizing implementation of program improvements after evaluation.

The approval of the staff recommendations will provide the services to develop and operate a pilot Transit Ambassador Program to launch in various geographic areas and station locations within the Metro bus and rail system in fall 2022.

#### **DETERMINATION OF SAFETY IMPACT**

The approval of the award(s) may positively impact the perception of public safety on the transit system. The staff recommendations will allow Metro to manage the professional services contractor (s) through the defined Statement of Work and associated contract requirements and deliverables. Staff will work with Metro's Customer Experience Department to continue to collect direct employee and rider feedback about the perception of public safety on the system before, during and after the pilot program.

Ambassadors will be a layer within Metro's overall public safety ecosystem in connection with Metro's system security, law enforcement, crisis response teams, and homeless outreach.

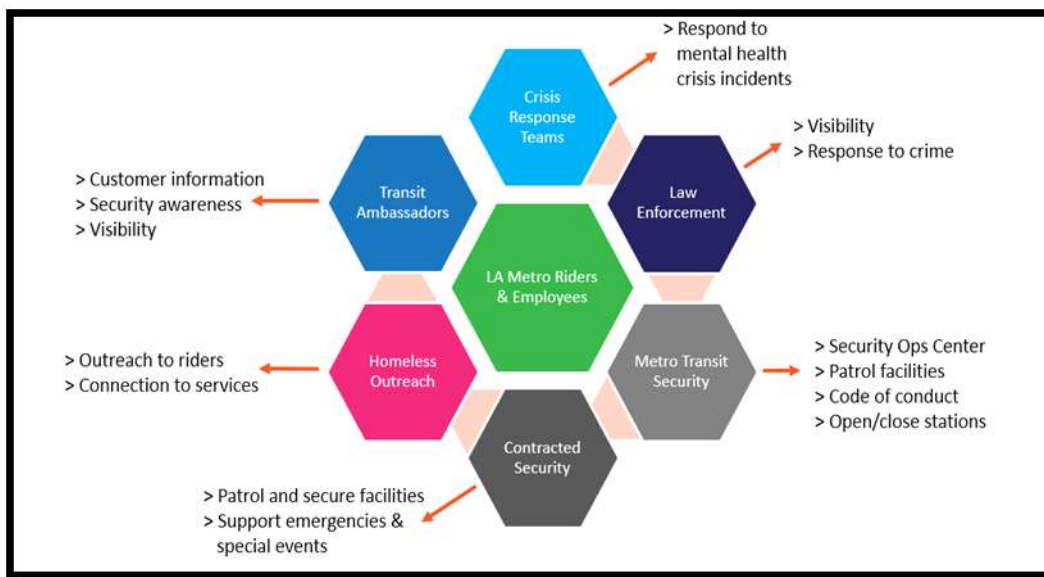


Figure 1. Metro's Public Safety Ecosystem (2022)

The Program personnel will report and observe any visible safety or maintenance issues that may create a public safety hazard, whether on board buses, trains, or within stations, including elevators. The Ambassador's role will complement the work of existing Metro staff, rather than replace their work. They will be expected to report safety hazards to the appropriate Metro maintenance or custodial staff.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT**

The FY23 Budget includes \$40 million under Cost Center 5420, Customer Programs and Services, Project 300040, Rail Operations Management and Admin. Upon board approval, the contract will be negotiated and executed, and services will be billed monthly at rates determined in the contract. The estimated not-to-exceed amount, inclusive of the final negotiated contract awards and future options, is \$122.8 million over the next five years. Since this is a multi-year contract, the Cost Center Manager, Project Manager, and Chief Customer Service Officer will be responsible for budgeting the costs in future years.

Impact to Budget

The sources of funding are Enterprise Funds and sales tax revenues dedicated for rail operations, which are eligible for bus and/or rail operating expenses.

**EQUITY PLATFORM**

The approval of the Ambassador Program services contracts will allow Metro to develop, implement, and evaluate the effectiveness of a Transit Ambassador Program pilot. Staff will evaluate key program metrics as outlined above to ensure that Metro delivers an improved overall customer experience on the transit system through this customer-facing program on board bus and rail vehicles and at transit stations. An equity review will be completed by Metro staff before the final deployment model for the program is established to ensure that the program has staff assigned to work in high need areas, including bus stops/stations and rail stations within Equity Focus Communities. There will also be future opportunities for community engagement and program

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adjustments as the program moves forward. The vision of the Ambassador Program will be for program ambassador staff to be representative of Metro and the communities we serve to better connect riders with the services and resources they need. Additionally - the bidding contractors were required to demonstrate their awareness of the Metro transit system, its cultural and geographic diversity, and the communities we serve.

The Diversity & Economic Opportunity Department (DEOD) has completed its initial evaluation of the Proposers' commitments to meet the 12 percent (12%) Small Business Enterprise (SBE) goal required in the RFP. Both Strive Well Being and RMI International's proposed commitment is deemed responsive to the requirements as they meet or exceed the 12% SBE goal.

### **IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS**

These recommendations will support Vision 2028 Strategic Goal #2 - Deliver outstanding trip experiences for all users of the transportation system and will support the agency's implementation of 2022 Customer Experience Plan Goals - a coordinated, comprehensive Transit Ambassador program will provide customer visibility and will demonstrate to communities that Metro is investing in improving the quality of commutes via the transit system. With a successful Transit Ambassador program, Metro will have a workforce of trained, uniformed, unarmed personnel on the system to welcome back former transit riders to the system and encourage customers to choose transit as they move around LA County.

### **ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED**

The Board can consider not authorizing the negotiation and award of the contracts; however, this will directly impact Metro's ability to deliver a Transit Ambassador program as outlined in Board Directed Motion 26.2 investments in public safety program initiatives.

### **NEXT STEPS**

Upon Board approval, staff will negotiate and execute firm fixed unit rate contracts to Strive Well-Being Inc. (Contract No. PS88001001) and RMI International Inc. (Contract No. PS88001000) to provide Transit Ambassador Program services. Staff will provide updates to the Board on the progress of the program.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A - Metro Board Motion 26.2 (March 2021)

Attachment B - Metro Board Motion 25.1 (November 2021)

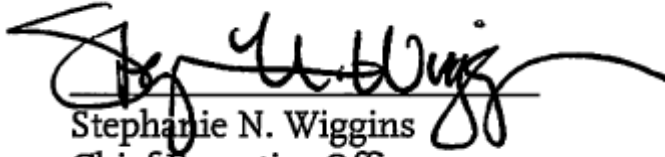
Attachment C - Public Safety Advisory Committee (PSAC) Transit Ambassadors Final Recommendations

Attachment D - Procurement Summary

Attachment E - DEOD Summary

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